



File Code: 2720

Date: February 20, 2020

Kathleen Kitzmann
City of Aurora
15151 E. Alameda Parkway
Aurora, CO 80012

Maria Pastore
Colorado Springs Utilities
P.O. Box 1103
Colorado Springs, CO 80947

Dear Ms. Kitzmann and Ms. Pastore:

This letter serves as written confirmation of the White River National Forest's (WRNF) formal acceptance of the Homestake Partners' (City of Aurora and Colorado Springs Utilities) SF-299 application packet, wherein the Partners are requesting authorization to conduct a fatal-flaw reservoir siting study within the Homestake Valley located on National Forest System lands in southeastern Eagle County, Colorado. Proposed activities include geologic mapping, geophysical survey, and subsurface exploration, as described in the Partners' Technical Report received by the WRNF on December 8, 2019.

As we have discussed previously, our acceptance of the Partners' application means that the WRNF will now commence with conducting an environmental analysis of the proposed activities in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Acceptance of the application also establishes the point at which the WRNF is required to start assessing Cost Recovery fees to collect for WRNF staff time dedicated to evaluating the proposal. Please note that payment of Cost Recovery fees is required, but does not guarantee approval of the proposal.

While the Technical Report is very helpful in understanding the proposed activities and potential impacts, please be aware that WRNF specialists have already confirmed that additional field surveys will be required for several resources in order to conduct an adequate environmental analysis, and that such surveys may not be possible until later in the spring season when snowpack has sufficiently receded.

Finally, it is our understanding that the Partners have decided to hire third-party consultants in order to support the WRNF in conducting certain tasks within the environmental analysis. (Fees assessed to the Partners by the consulting firms are separate and distinct from WRNF Cost Recovery fees.) Once the environmental analysis commences, it will be important to establish a communications firewall between the Partners and the consultants on all substantive aspects of the analysis, in order to maintain the integrity of an analysis that is free from undue influence.



Consequently, we ask that the Partners direct all future questions regarding the analysis and permitting process to WRNF staff in our Minturn office, specifically Matt Klein, Realty Specialist, who will serve as Interdisciplinary Team leader for this analysis. Matt can be reached at (970) 827-5182 or matthew.klein@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



ADAM BIANCHI
District Ranger (Acting)

cc: Scott Fitzwilliams, Lisa Stoeffler, Marcia Gilles, Matt Klein